



Charlotte Mason's House of Education,
Scale How, Ambleside, UK, 2009

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Three hours a day for brain work leaves time for physical training, for art, for leisure, rest and enjoyment—during some of which, consciously or unconsciously, the mind carries on its work of digestion. No more pressure and hurry, no wearing out of the eyesight by evening work, no pale cheeks and stooping shoulders, no anxiety, no break-down when the examination is within sight, no after-loathing of study, no loss of enthusiasm and joyousness.

But it is to parents that I appeal with passionate earnestness, for it has been my fate to see much of the bitter consequences of over-pressure. Loss of health and impaired eyesight, depressed spirits, decay of memory and faculty, weeks of care and worry culminating in an exhausting final effort; I wish these were the worst, but, in more than one case, death—in one, alas, suicide!

Parental vanity, ignorance, and greed blind fathers and mothers to the dangers of over-pressure. To obtain some advantage or distinction they goad on their too willing children, heedless of the risk, more often unaware of the risk. For any real good? Oh, no! for the vain, transitory *appearance* of knowledge, bought at a terrible price, and lost almost as soon as gained.

It is hard for parents to fight against teachers and examiners; it is hard to resist the temptation to see your son's name in the paper and your girl decked in a cap and gown. The teachers urge you on, and laugh at your fears. Their work is over when the boy and girl leave school; they neither see nor know the after effects of over-pressure. Their responsibilities are ended. But what sort of men and women boys and girls become is the parents' concern, and a good, happy, useful life *must* have a basis of physical well-being.

I have not over-stated my own experience of this wrong. If so much misery has come under the notice of *one* individual, what must be the sum of misery that could be gathered from the experience of many? If so much evil is seen, admitted, recognised, how much unseen, unadmitted, unrecognised evil is slowly sapping the vitality of the rising generation.

THE CHILDREN'S HOUR.

THOSE HOLY FIELDS:

BEING SUNDAY EVENING THOUGHTS FOR OUR CHILDREN
CONCERNING

"Those holy fields,
Over whose acres walked those blessed feet
Which eighteen hundred years ago were nailed,
For our advantage, to the bitter cross."

BY THE REV. C. H. CHASE.

XVIII.

"THE VIRGIN'S FOUNTAIN." *

"The Lord is with thee, fear not."—*St. Luke* i. 28 and 30.

It is sundown at Nazareth. A busy scene indeed. Here they come from all parts of the village: mothers, maidens, children, each with her pitcher for a draught of that pure clear water from the Virgin's Fountain. What a picture it makes; the bright dresses, the arched stone fountain, the fifteen hills around, the white dwellings, the old Greek church hard by, the deep blue sky, the grey green olives, the cactus hedges.

As we stand and watch that lovely maiden with her dark hair, her brown eyes, her rosy lips showing the beautiful white teeth, we go back in thought nearly nineteen hundred years. It is eventide at this same fountain. A peasant maiden comes with her pitcher, her name is Mary, some rough village folk put her on one side. She is patient, she is gentle, she humbly waits

* The tradition of the Greek Church is that Mary heard the message from the Angel at the Fountain.

while others fill their tall red jars, and then as she bends down to lift up her pitcher to her head, she sees a stranger; beautiful, very beautiful; she hears a voice which sounds like Heavenly music: "Hail thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee, blessed art thou—fear not;" and the Angel Messenger is gone.

Home to her mother runs the wondering maid, and from the lips of the good St. Anne learns the meaning of a salutation, strange in her ears.

All generations shall call her blessed. Yea, and she is blessed. But, blessed, too, may you be, dear child, if you learn as Mary did, gentleness, humility, and simple trust.

Oh, that I could look into those clear blue eyes which read this page, and see in them the mirror of a soul pure within. Oh, that I could see those bright rosy lips which move now as they read these very words, and know they never speak a cross, unkindly or hasty word.

Oh, that I could whisper in that little ear of yours as the Angel did to Mary—"The Lord is *with thee*—fear not."

You will not be afraid, will you? Not afraid of wicked men, or wicked sprits, or wicked thoughts—not afraid of darkness or of storm? You will say it to *yourself* again and again, "Fear not," "fear not," the Lord is with me—I will fear no evil—then peace God's own holy peace will keep your heart.

"Mine eyes are watching by thy bed,
Mine arms are underneath thy head,
My blessing is around thee shed,
'Tis I, be not afraid."

XIX.

THE CARPENTER'S SHOP.

"Is not this the Carpenter?"—*St. Mark*, vi. 7.

AFTER leaving the Virgin's Fountain, our guide leads us along the narrow streets of Nazareth, until we reach an open shop door, just within stands the village carpenter plane in hand—near him is a half-finished cradle; on the wall are saws, awls, and other tools. The ground is covered with chips and shavings, we pick up some to be kept for the eyes of little people at home; for is not the Carpenter's Shop at Nazareth a place full of sacred memories?

We next follow our guide to a small dimly lighted church, said to be built on the very spot where the Old Carpenter's shop stood when Joseph was the carpenter, and the boy Jesus helped him at his trade. Over the altar of this church is a truly natural picture; Mary, the Blessed Mother, is seated with her distaff, Joseph is standing near with a carpenter's tool in his hand, and the Holy Child Jesus, with a face which tells of love and obedience, with an open scroll, is about to ask a question.

The carpenter's shop, the picture of Jesus; both set us thinking; and we ask ourselves the question: "Is not *this* the Carpenter? He who was very God of very God? He who worked miracles?" It was a poor beginning, as man measures for Him, to spend so many years at a carpenter's bench.

Does some dear child, who reads this despise and look down upon others who are poor or in a humble position, and feel ashamed to be seen in their company? Remember God has set a special honour upon poverty, and the carpenter at Nazareth has made sacred the cottager's home.

Learn to treat all with respect, and gentle, kindly courtesy.

No real lady or gentleman ever despises or looks down on others. Many a *gentle* man is found in working man's dress, and many a *noble* man works at a carpenter's bench.

"He came down to earth from Heaven,
Who is God and Lord of all,
And His shelter was a stable,
And His cradle in a stall;
With the poor and mean, and lowly,
Lived on earth our Saviour holy.

"And, through all His wondrous childhood,
He would honour and obey,
Love, and watch the lowly maiden,
In whose gentle arms He lay;
Christian children all must be
Mild, obedient, good as He."

XX.

THE OLD SYNAGOGUE.

"As His custom was He went into the Synagogue."—*St. Luke* iv. 16.

HERE is indeed an old building, these columns at its entrance look as if they might be almost any age. The building is now

a Christian Church; but it is on the site, and possibly built with some of the very stones, of that Synagogue to which Jesus so often went, and where, when a man, He stood up to read.

"You know what a Synagogue is. It is a Jewish place of worship."*

The Synagogue was arranged, as far as possible, after the plan of the old Tabernacle. The space inside was not seated, but was for the general congregation. A little beyond the middle was a raised platform. Here the reader stood to offer prayer, or read the lessons from the holy writings. In the wall at the farther end was a recess, before which hung a veil or curtain. In a box or ark was kept the Sacred Rolls, wrapped in several covers of linen and silk, the outer one richly worked with gold and silver thread.

Before the veil hung a lamp, and beside it a seven branched candlestick. Rabbis and elders sat on raised cushions in the chief seats near the veil, facing the people.

The men came in to worship in their long flowing robes, with turban of various colours, some simple, some costly—with fringes to their garments; and every man, and every boy over thirteen years, would wear the phylacteries (the little leathern boxes containing texts on parchment) on arm and forehead. Deep was the reverence in the heart of every Nazarene for this his house of prayer. Intense was the longing in many hearts for the coming of their Messiah, as they worshipped with their faces towards Jerusalem.

Jesus went as His custom was into the Synagogue, for He loved to worship His Father there; but little did His fellow-villagers know that He was their Messiah, who stood among them.

Do you love God's house, dear child? Are you very reverent as you draw near to worship your Father there?

Do you really pray from your young heart as Jesus did? Do you like to hear the Old World stories of Hebrew heroes as Jesus did? Do you praise in Psalm as Jesus did?

You say, I find it so hard to be attentive. I cannot understand when the minister stands up to read or speak. I must be very unlike what Jesus was. Dear child, if the loving heart is there, He knows it; if you want to worship Him, He knows it.

* From "Life and Words of Christ," by Geikie,

Cultivate a reverent praiseful spirit, and you will grow to love His house and be glad and rejoice in Him.

"We love the place, O God,
Wherein thine honour dwells;
The joy of thine abode
All earthly joy excels.

"It is the house of prayer,
Wherein Thy servants meet;
And Thou, O Lord, art there
Thy chosen flock to greet."

XXI.

THE NAZARETH CHILDREN'S MESSAGE.

"Hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown."—

Rev. iii. 11.

IN St. Luke's Gospel we read that the Nazareth people took Jesus to the brow of the hill, and tried to cast him down, because they were angry at the words He spoke in their Synagogue.

On that very spot, so it is said, now stands the Nazareth Orphanage. Here some seventy little girls learn to sing the praise of the Holy Jesus.

On a bright Sunday afternoon we visited this home of love. Sweetly did the children sing their own favourite hymn: "We are little Nazareth children." Eagerly do they listen to a message from some English school girls.

"Shall I carry back a message from you?" I asked.

Every eye sparkles, every hand is put out, every face says plainly, "Oh, yes!"

"Well, but how can I take seventy messages?" Then comes a happy thought. "The youngest child, and the eldest, shall send a message." So here they are.

The message from the little lame girl, the last in the bottom row of the gallery:

"The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want."

The message from the eldest girl, the one nearest the wall in the top row:

"Hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown."

The messages have been carried across the sea, and you, dear child, now receive them.

A Nazareth maiden and you are thus linked together—you will never see her face on earth. I trust you will see her in the King's own country.

Then she will, perhaps, ask: "Did you have my message—'Hold fast?'"

Whatever you do, *hold fast by God*. Whatever happens, cling to Him. Say it over and over again. He *is*, he must be, he ever will be, my Father.

Hold fast the Faith. "The faith once delivered to the saints."

The Creed is like an old military flag; be proud of it, thankful for it, fight for it.

Some have died to defend the Faith; do you hold it fast, say I *do* believe, I *will* believe. Some are like reeds by the water-side, blown about by every false doctrine and false teacher. Never mind what others do; as for you, be firm.

Hold fast right doing.

Right doing follows right thinking, just as wrong doing follows wrong thinking. When other children older than you try to persuade you to do wrong say, "No; I will hold fast to the right."

Then no man shall take thy crown, for

"A crown He will bestow
On all who seek His favour
And serve Him here below."

Nazareth children and English children will swell the triumph of the King, all crowns will be laid at His feet, the feet of the all glorious Jesus of Nazareth.

HYMN OF THE NAZARETH CHILDREN.*

"We are little Nazareth children,
And our Father placed our home
'Mid the olive trees and vineyards
Where, as child, He used to roam.
"For the Lord, who loves the children,
And was glad to hear their praise,
Cares that Nazareth children know Him,
Do His will, and choose His ways.
"Cares that they should keep in memory
All that sacred life spent here,
Try in heart to walk beside Him,
Safe and happy in His fear.

* This hymn can be sung to Tune 76, A. and M.

"And we know that He is coming,
Every knee to Him shall bow;
And the joyous shouts to greet Him,
Shall begin in Nazareth now.

"Jesus, Saviour, dwell within us,
Make a temple of each heart,
Pure and loving, true and holy,
For thy service set apart."

XXII.

THE GREAT BATTLE FIELD.

"The battle is the Lord's."—I Sam. xvii. 47.

ON Sunday evening, just before sunset, we ascend the hill above Nazareth—holy is every step of those green slopes.

The Fountain of the Virgin, Joseph's workshop, the Synagogue, these are all changed: but the everlasting hills are the very same which the sacred feet of Jesus so often trod.

The view as it is spread before us to-night is the one He over and over again gazed upon.

There to the west lie the blue Mediterranean, Carmel, the scene of Elijah's sacrifice, and Kishon, the brook where Baal's prophets were slain.

To the north we can still see Hermon, with its snow cap; the Horns of Hattim, and the village of Cana.

To the east rises Tabor, a curious rounded hill, covered with stunted olive trees.

To the south stretches the great plain of Esdraelon or Jezreel, the battle-field of Hebrew history. In its centre is "the little hill," "the lesser Hermon," as it is now called. Round its base cluster the three villages, Nain and Endor on its north side, Shunem on its south. While away over the plain, now one vast corn-field, are the hills of Gilboa and the site of Jezreel, Ahab's city.

Full indeed of Bible story is almost every spot which is visible.

How the boy Jesus must have loved to stand where we now stand, and picture the days of His forefathers, and those battles which made His own Israel a people mighty and renowned.

Were not those battles the Lord's? Was it not Jehovah who fought for Israel?

The sun is about to sink, but before it is lost to sight it lights up with glorious crimson glow the western sky, while opal patches here and there are like windows in Heaven.

The place, the association, the sunset, all speak to us of Hope. Is not life, your life and mine, dear child, a battle-field? Are we not soldiers pledged to fight?

The battle is the Lord's.

"To-day the noise of battle,
The next the victor's song."

Victory is ours if we persevere; if we look to our Captain's power. Never mind what odds are against us.

Could anything seem more hopeless than Israel's condition when the women were afraid even to draw water, when the villages were almost deserted, when the travellers crept by byways? Then God arose and delivered Israel.

Do you sometimes find all things against you? Right doing very hard? Temptations very strong? Cry out to Him, your Mighty Champion, and He will come to you, for the battle is His.

"Thine, O Lord, is the Power and the Glory and *the Victory*."

"Strong in the Lord of hosts,
And in His mighty power,
Who in the strength of Jesus trusts
Is more than conqueror.

"Stand then in His great might,
With all His strength endued.
And take, to arm you for the fight,
The panoply of God.

"That, having all things done,
And all your conflicts past,
Ye may obtain, through Christ alone,
A crown of joy at last."

(To be continued.)

SEEDS OF STORY FROM OTHER COUNTRIES.

V.

REACHING the Teikōku (Imperial Hotel), we found its lofty hall and dining-saloon exquisitely decked with festoons of chrysanthemums and the flags of many nations, including the Union Jack and the Star-spangled Banner, blending with that of Japan—a huge red ball, the rising sun upon a white ground. The decorations had been left up for a week after the ball given by the Prime Minister in honour of the Mikado's birthday, and were perfectly fresh, having been arranged in long bamboo-stems full of water, notched at intervals. I counted forty-five blooms, the size of a large orange, on one kiku plant, and heard of some in the Mikado's garden that had 328 blooms, all differing in kind and colour; and at Nagoya a jinrishka was seen made of immense kiku blossoms. It is impossible to describe the beautiful varieties of the chrysanthemums. There are about 200 species, and each florist has different specimens. They grow to an immense height, some almost touching the ceiling, and their circumference is in proportion. We visited a florist's, and for some minutes before reaching his garden we passed cart after cart laden with lovely plants, all drawn by coolies. The garden, as large as an ordinary backyard, was filled with plants, each having a long paper label attached with its name in Japanese characters. Their names are very picturesque—e.g., "Fisher's Lantern." The buds were tied round with paper, choice specimens being supported in a frame on which was a ruff of paper, while others were protected by a paper bell hanging over them. The Japanese are great gardeners, and give such individual attention to each blossom that they obtain wonderful results. I asked if it were true that they helped the buds of delicate flowers to